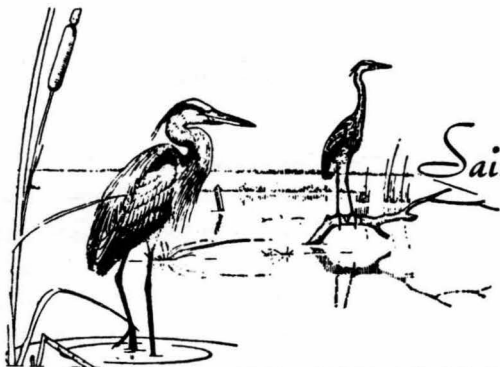




Saint Louis Audubon

Bulletin

Vol. 24 No. 2

October 1955

CYPRESS KINGDOM

with Alexander Sprunt, Jr.

Each year in mid-October we are again given the pleasant opportunity of attending the Audubon Screen Tours. This year will be a red letter one in-so-much as the overall quality of our lecturers is probably better than ever. To begin we will have Alexander Sprunt, Jr. Those who have toured the southern parts of Florida with Alex will assure you that no better naturalist-story teller exists. For his subject he will have those forbidding yet attractive lands of mystery, Cypress Kingdom, wooded labyrinth of the South, swamp home of Seminole and cottonmouth. But those who have penetrated the watery wilderness of the cypress swamp know it to be a teeming reservoir of plant and animal life.

Deep into oxbows and sloughs by air, by boat and on foot, Alexander Sprunt, Jr. leads the way. Mr. Sprunt, famous naturalist, who is widely known for his personally conducted Audubon Wild-life Tours, now takes his audience on a color motion picture journey.

Beneath the lofty columns of cypress and strangler fig, man's stature is dwarfed. Only intermittent patches of azure sky reveal the ibis circling high above tree-top colonies. Below, alligators lie half-hidden in lettuce lakes and the snake bird swims through shadowy waters. Barred owls watch silently from the branches above. Egrets fish among cypress knees and herons preen in shafts of sunlight. Airplants and miniature orchids add extravagance to an already lavish foliage.

In stark contrast to the air of fantasy is man-made reality; lumbering the valuable trees, and the aftermath of devastation, drought and fire. There is dramatic impact in comparison with the lily-filled water trails of Seminole Indians now and long ago. Mr. Sprunt delights his audience with vivid tales of the Seminoles . . . even to sewing machines, skirts and snails!

This is a kingdom of overpowering beauty and tranquillity, where the osprey wheels overhead, the hell-diver sinks below; where still waters reign and the cypress is sovereign.

No one will want to miss this. The date - October 17, 8:15, The Third Baptist Church, Grand and Washington Avenues. Invite your friends. This year admission is free.

S.O.S. FROM U.S.S. CONSERVATION

By P. Bruce Dowling

The "new look" in conservation this year is not nearly as pretty as one of Christian Dior's new models, nor is it as sleek as the new model sports cars; neither has it grown on the boom of an expanding economy. Rather, the total resource picture reflecting the views and desires of the people, looks bad. Is this fact, or only the solitary grumbling of a pessimistic prophet of gloom and doom? Is resource conservation being pushed back those two steps Aldo Leopold predicted, or are we stepping ahead one?

Land acquisition for conservation purposes by government agencies has been almost nil since World War II. In fact, we have lost or are in danger of losing parts of our national forest lands, through mineral rights clauses and other loopholes. Wildlife refuges, like Wichita Mountain, Desert Game Range, Tule Lake, are in grave danger from both the military and local special interest groups. That the threat to our national park system is increasing is witnessed by the attempts to destroy "Dinosaur". The only bright spot in an otherwise gloomy public lands picture is the wildlife management land being acquired by many states.

Past and present attempts at conservation education have generally failed because of scattergun methods. If we attempted to sell cars, cigarettes, corn or even ourselves to our employers, using present too little-too late methods, we would be destitute. Politics in agricultural conservation practices, the fight of the Soil Conservation Service to keep its head above water, and weaknesses in other organized conservation efforts, show the need for an agonizing reappraisal.

What is conservation? Resource use? Natural history? Land management? Are they the same? Do they interrelate? First, the textbook definition of conservation generally runs like this: "Conservation is wise use." There's the rub - all of us try to act wisely but as Tennyson said, "Knowledge comes but wisdom lingers." Here wisdom is so ambiguous that everyone you talk to is for conservation - none against it. Each pats the other on the back as our resources disappear down the drain for lack of unified action. The hundred or more national and regional conservation groups have yet to produce a truly united front in resource use. To be sure, many naturalists condemn sportsmen for killing game. Still, the non-hunter must admit that sportsmen's activities have been largely responsible for many of the protective efforts made for wildlife. In a great many cases, the naturalist, protectionist and hunter reflect differ-

ent personalities of the same person, each manifesting its love for the out-of-doors in a different way.

Let us dispel the opinion that we are always on the right road in our conservation desires. The understanding of the complex interworkings of soil-water-vegetation-animal (including man)-air-energy resources eludes us as do the detailed interchanges of a biological food web. However, as in a food web, we do have a working knowledge of the parts of the whole given to us by science. The point is that the taking of a single land mass, like a national park, or a single animal or plant species, and saying that protection or wise use of this area or species is conservation could be untrue as well as unrealistic. We cannot separate parts from the whole. That some conservationists and special interest groups have often stood on shaky ground against the use of a resource to benefit the general public is common knowledge. Let us be honest when we attempt to acquire a wilderness, wildlife, recreational or natural ecological area – not hiding behind the term “conservation area” but permitting the areas’ uses to determine its acceptance by the public, each on its own merits.

Criticisms of present conservation programs and practices have been flowing thick and fast, but there is still reason for some optimism. That something needs to be done by we who call ourselves naturalists, and who tend to think like Leopold, Burroughs and Emerson, is most assuredly true. That those of us who work a scant forty hours or less a week should devote some leisure hours to active work in natural history is paramount. To make natural history as popular as baseball, Davy Crockett, or the \$64,000 question should be our project. This takes a program which has nature students coming out of the ground like spontaneous generation. It will take a lay group in St. Louis strong enough to acquire a center and staff for training future professional and amateur naturalists. Natural ecological areas such as prairies, fresh water marshes, climax forests and similar areas could be acquired under the Nature Conservancy plans for perpetuation. Funds might be sought from workers’ organizations as the A.F.L. helped finance acquisition of Mettler’s Woods in New Jersey. Other sources might be industrial concerns, private contributions, professional fund raising and, lastly, and only lastly, from the public coffers.

Nature study taught in schools, clubs, and boy scouts, has been a leading achievement of many of the St. Louis Audubon members as have the teacher training programs carried on by the society. A vastly expanded program, in after-school clubs, weekend and classroom teaching on both pupil and teacher levels, should be encouraged on a scale comparable to the task of directing wholesomely the native curiosity about nature found in all children.

The actual management of private lands based on biological principles is one of the most satisfying contributions an individual can make. It is especially noteworthy when just plain interested citizens do a better job of scientific resource use on their own land than do some professional conservationists, who preach what they do not practice. Bird watchers, with a little time and research concentrated on the needs of a threatened species, might help to bring back to Missouri such birds as Ruffed Grouse, Kites and Prairie Chicken. Just watching the birds doesn't help them.

Finally, there is a need for an unremitting active leadership in proposing national resource management plans to civic and governmental groups on local, regional and national levels. Anyone with a heartfelt desire, from a top executive to a busy housewife, can give some of the public leadership it needs. It is the never-ending duty of a naturalist to maintain a watch over our natural resources. Did you know the Bricker Amendment would have nullified the migratory bird treaties with Canada and Mexico? The desires of some Canadian farmers to shoot Sandhill Cranes could become more of a reality than a threat if we do not wake up.

Arnold Toynbee in his "A Study of History", while discussing the breakdown of civilizations, describes the end of civilizations as being caused by internal suicide or murder — this suicide is a result of failure to grow or prosper. We, too, could contribute to the murder of resource conservation by our failure to keep it growing. Only by giving transfusions of our energy and personal wealth can we be assured of the future "Nature" that our hearts desire.

In conclusion, let us always observe the scientific truths of nature, practice the scientific method, but above all, no matter how high we fly in fancy, not lose sight of the fact that "these clumsy feet still in the mire go crushing blossoms without end."

Answers to Quiz on Page 12.

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Wood duck. | 6. Cowbird. |
| 2. Blue bird. | 7. Both |
| 3. Horned lark. | 8. Osprey. |
| 4. Downey and piliated. | 9. Skrike. |
| 5. Thrush. | 10. Merganser. |



Observations



J. Earl Comfort

Summer and Fall bird study in the St. Louis Area was under par this year mainly because the expected shot in the arm to birders from shorebirds failed to materialize, a situation that existed also in 1954. A lack of suitable mud flats caused these interesting birds to detour our region. A luxuriant growth of vegetation to the water's edge of most local lakes was a factor in the mud flat elimination. The lakes of Grand Marais State Park in East St. Louis were our best shorebirding spots.

Early September gave us a few warbler wave spurts that should increase if weather conditions are right, which means wrong for warbler migrants which may be held in our area by unfavorable weather.

Strong candidate for bird of the year was a laughing gull in breeding plumage on the Mississippi River above the Alton Dam on May 30th. This bird was originally found by Sally Springer and Irene Weber and seen there later in the day by Mr. and Mrs. Dick Anderson. This is our only modern record of this rare gull . . . Three Franklin's gulls were observed in the same general area on the same day, making it a memorable date for rare gulls.

Creve Coeur Lake in St. Louis Co. was heavily populated by American egrets, and green, great blue and black-crowned night herons from mid-June well into Fall. The lake was shallow enough to accommodate these birds, but not deep enough for easy boating.

Florida gallinule nesting was successful at Grand Marais State Park as evidenced by an adult with 3 young noted there late in August by Sally Springer.

ST. LOUIS AUDUBON BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY

The St. Louis Audubon Society

Earl H. HathPresident

James F. ComfortEditor

Mrs. J. Marshall WagnerExecutive Secretary

OBSERVATIONS OF AN AUDUBON CAMPER

By Mildred M. Reese

As autumn makes its entrance in the scheme of things, vacations of 1955 are for the most part, history, but formulating plans for next year's vacations affords almost as much pleasure as the vacation itself.

If you haven't participated in a two-week session at a National Audubon Camp, you have missed an opportunity to enrich your knowledge and experiences in the field of natural history. Whether your interests lean toward the scientific or you indulge your 'hobby' for the sheer pleasure of observing nature's handiwork, you can 'absorb' enough information to feel that you are an integral part of the entire ecological 'picture'. Besides it is such fun! Never a dull moment. Don't go with the idea of lounging around or having breakfast in bed or any such fantastic notions—camp life isn't exactly rugged — but it isn't a summer resort.

Now that the mid-west has an Audubon Camp, there is no excuse for putting off attendance because the distance is too great or the place inaccessible. The two weeks which I spent at the Audubon Camp of Wisconsin were certainly enjoyable; new acquaintances were made which will always be a pleasure; the outstanding personalities who gave their time, effort and knowledge for the edification of the campers are certainly to be commended. I cannot think of another place where one can enjoy magnificent scenery, the association of people interested in natural history and conservation, the opportunity to increase one's knowledge of many subjects, in pleasing surroundings with the added dash of timed activities — and all this for a nominal sum! Really, there isn't anything like it! Why don't you make your plans, now, to enroll for a session at the Audubon Camp of Wisconsin, next year?

ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Regular	5	Supporting	50
Husband-Wife, Regular	8	Contributing	100
Sustaining	10	Life	200
Husband-Wife, Sustaining	18		

Membership includes subscription to Audubon Magazine and free Admission to Screen Tours. Student Membership includes subscription to Canadian Illustrated.

In addition to membership dues, many members make special gifts to enable the St. Louis Society to carry on other activities, and this is most warmly appreciated.

In order to carry out our program, contact your friends, tell them of the conservation work done by the Audubon Society at both National and Local levels. Many of them would like to be associated with us.

STATE AUDUBON MEETING

The Audubon Society of Missouri will hold its Annual Fall Meeting at Camp Clover Point, Lake of Ozarks State Park, October 8 & 9. The Jefferson City Audubon Society will act as host club and President Sydney Wade assures everyone that we will have another fine meeting. Those who have attended one of these affairs at an organized Camping area know that a wonderful weekend is in store for them. St. Louis and vicinity has always sent a large delegation and this year will be no exception. The State Meeting will offer an opportunity to visit the Ozarks when they are at their best, enjoy some wonderful field trips, fraternize with birders and nature students from all over the State, eat four wonderfully cooked and extra generous meals (you will surprise yourself with your increased appetite) attend two well planned programs, and generally enjoy yourself.

Jim Jackson from Washington, Mo., is in charge of the program and although it is not complete he has lined up enough to whet our appetites. Harold Hedges from Quivera, Kansas, will show pictures and tell of his experiences floating Ozark streams. The Hedges have gained a wide reputation as a family who have floated possibly more Missouri's streams than anyone in the State, and oddly enough these are not fishing trips. They find this is a wonderful way to enjoy, study, and appreciate nature. We are sure we will enjoy this part of the program. Last year David Jones of Webster Groves led a forum which proved so popular that we have again scheduled him. Another part of the program will be a slide and short movie showing. Everyone is invited to bring ten of their best slides or a short movie. We know many of the St. Louis Area folk have some excellent work . . . Bring them along. Still another feature will be exhibitions - If you have anything that you would like to exhibit- anything on natural history- conservation- or any other like subject please let us know about it. Rex Conyers will be in charge of this part of the program. Contact him if you wish to show anything.

The cost of this wonderful weekend will be less than you probably expect- Meals \$3.00 for the four; lodging and camp fee \$1.50. Less than \$5.00 for the weekend. All you need bring is covering for the night- and a good appetite. The beds are soft- the weather wonderful.

If you are interested, Call Woodland 2-8373, Florence Comfort is in charge of reservations for the St. Louis Area. Membership in the State Audubon Society is not required to attend. Everyone is invited.

WILDERNESS AREAS

With Roger Tory Peterson

On Thursday, December 6, St. Louis will be host to the Country's foremost ornithologist. Mr. Roger Tory Peterson is well worthy of the name "Mr. Ornithology". He will be here to show his colored movie "Wild America", a story of our diminishing wilderness areas.

Few bird or nature students need an introduction to Roger Tory Peterson. His field guides have become the bird-watcher's Bibles not only in America but in Europe. They are now the standard guides for field identification of birds for beginners and experts alike. His famous bird paintings and prints adorn the walls of many homes; his splendid illustrations highlight bird books; and he has lectured before many distinguished audiences throughout this continent and abroad.

Roger Tory Peterson was born in Jamestown, N.Y., where he attended the public schools. When his seventh grade science teacher organized a Junior Audubon Club the whole future course of his life was determined. From the age of eleven the outdoor world formed the hub about which his life revolved. His drawing ability became apparent, and his art career began by attendance at the Art Students' League in New York City. Week-ends he roamed the fields and woods with an energetic group of young ornithologists. Later he attended the National Academy of Design.

While teaching art and science in Boston he created his first "Field Guide to the Birds". First published in 1934, it was regarded as revolutionary and has since sold over 350,000 copies. In that same year he joined the staff of the National Audubon Society, where, among other things, he rewrote the very Junior Audubon leaflets which had turned the current of his life into its present channel. He continued to paint and to photograph birds. And he travelled 20,000 miles in the writing of his "Field Guide to Western Birds", published in 1941. In 1954 the "Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe" was published in London where it was a best seller. It was soon translated into Dutch, German, French, Swedish and Spanish. He is editor of the Houghton-Mifflin classic Field Guide Series which is rapidly becoming the core of every outdoor hobbyist's library. In addition to the field guides, he also is author of the splendidly illustrated "Birds of America", featuring his own photography, and "Wildlife in Color". He is a fellow and member of the council of the American Ornithologists' Union and is honorary vice-president of the New Jersey Audubon Society, Massachusetts Audubon Society and the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia, and member of the board of the National Audubon Society. He is art director of the National Wildlife Federation and holds a degree of Doctor of Sciences from Franklin and Marshall College.

As an author, artist, scientist and lecturer, Roger Tory Peterson has probably interested more people in bird life than any other man living.

FISH-EATERS WELCOME!

By Floyd B. Chapman

Not long ago a farmpond owner asked the advice of the Ohio Division of Wildlife on how to control coots and grebes ("mudhens and helldivers", he called them) that he claimed were feeding on his fish. The first thing I told him was that coots or mudhens are vegetarians, but that grebes, commonly called helldivers, do actually consume a great many small fish.

But are such fish-eating birds a menace to fishing? It wasn't many years ago, in the heyday of size and creel limits and closed seasons on fishes, that the fisherman felt quite bitter about kingfishers, herons, gulls, terns, grebes, loons, and other fish-eating birds that seemed to be competing with him on lake and river. But now the picture has changed. Liberalized fishing, at least for the warm water species, is here, and with it the fish-eating birds should get a better break.

Going back to that letter from our farmer friend, were the pied-billed grebes fishing on his farmpond actually doing him harm? I answered in the negative, pointing out that many if not most farmponds are underfished. If such a pond is not fished hard, it is apt to get out of balance, and consistent catches of puny bluegills and stunted bass are not conducive to the happiness of any pond owner.

"Yes," I told the farmer, "you might get a federal permit to kill off the fish-eating birds but, in so doing, you could be losing valuable allies in the constant struggle to maintain good fishing in your pond." If I were a pond owner I would go all out to encourage grebes, loons, and herons - even kingfishers - to hang around my pond.

I went on to tell the pond owner how fisheries biologists are finding that removing many of the small fishes (competitors for food and space) in a pond will permit more fish to grow up to eatable size. Then I drew a parallel between the man who successfully manages his pond for bigger fish and better fishing and the orchard owner who is confronted with the problem of too many small apples on his trees. The orchardist knows he will have bigger apples, but not as many of them, if he thins the crop. It is expensive to thin by hand, so he may cautiously use chemical sprays which cause some of the apples to fall off. In planting most of his crops, the farmer is well aware of the necessity for proper spacing of the plants to obtain bumper yields. There is strong competition by plants for the available nutrients in the soil, just as there is by fish for the available food in a farmpond.

WASHINGTON U. OFFERS ECOLOGY COURSE

Residents of St. Louis will be offered the opportunity of learning more about ecology from one of the foremost students in this field in the area. Dr. Alfred G. Etter, Director of Washington University's School of Medicine Experimental Farm at Clarksville, needs no introduction to Audubon Society Screen Tour audiences. He was a consultant biologist for President Truman's Water Resource Policy Commission and studied in New Mexico as a Fellow with the Ford Foundation.

With this background he is excellently equipped to teach a course in Ecology. Classes will be held on Mondays 7:30-9:15 p.m. It will be an accredited course carrying two units. Further information may be obtained from the University College, Washington University.

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President Earl Hath and Treasurer Joel Massie vacationed together with their families in the Rocky Mountain National Park.

FIELD TRIPS

Creve Coeur Lake – Meet at Refreshment Stand – 8:00 a.m., Saturday, October 15. Leaders, Earl Comfort and Earl Hath.

Weldon Springs – Meet at Main Gate; Sunday, October 16, 8:00 a.m., November 13, and December 11 at 8:00 a.m. In conjunction with W. G. N. S. S.

Rockwoods Reservation – Meet at Museum; Saturday, October 29, 8:00. Leaders, George and Polly Moore.

Christmas Census – January 1, 8:00 a.m., Weldon Springs. Leader, Stoner Haven. In conjunction with W. G. N. S. S.

Louise Meunsch will have as her guest on her regular program on WEW Friday, October, 7th, at 9:15 a.m., Mrs. Arthur Hughes, former Secretary of the Society. Mrs. Hughes will discuss the screen tours with emphasis on the fact that they will be free to the public. Notify your friends of this opportunity to learn more about this program.

SCREEN TOUR PROGRAM FOR 1955-56

Monday, October 17 – **THE CYPRESS KINGDOM** – Alexander Sprunt, Jr.

Tuesday, December 6 – **WILD AMERICA** – Roger Tory Peterson

Thursday, January 26 – **ANIMALS AT NIGHT IN COLOR** – Howard Cleaves

Monday, March 19 – **THE LONG FLIGHT BACK** – Robert P. Allen

Monday, April 30 – **WANDERLAND** – William H. Wagoner, Jr.

Mark these dates on your calendar. Tell your friends of the wonderful opportunity to see and hear these wonderful fine programs. Remember this year, Admission Will be Free.

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WHOOPING CRANE'S FLIGHT STARTS SOON

By Robert Allen

The world's last flock of whooping cranes will soon be on the move again! Their fall migration from Canada to Texas — always a dramatic event — will have new significance this year.

For the first time in the history of recent efforts to preserve this rarest of North American birds, the exact breeding grounds of some of the birds are known and the young-of-the-year have been observed and counted prior to their departure southward. This means that wildlife officials will be able to determine more accurately than ever before the nature and extent of any losses along the 2500 mile migration highway.

This past summer field biologists of the Canadian Wildlife Service, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Audubon Society succeeded in locating what is apparently the bulk of the breeding flock of whooping cranes in a remote wilderness in northwest Canada, thus ending a ten year search. In addition to aerial surveys, a ground party, after a month of failure, finally reached the vicinity of the nests and made important studies of the general habitat and its wildlife.

In subsequent surveys from the air a total of five young whooping cranes had been counted as of the first week in August — youngsters that were hatched in June and will not be big enough to fly before sometime in September, when they must join the adult birds on the hazardous flight south. The all-important question in the minds of conservationists now is: how many of these young whooping cranes will get through safely to the wintering grounds on the Texas coast?

This is a challenge that can be met only by those who live close to the migratory route, especially residents of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. The National Audubon Society appeals to you to help by speaking to your friends and neighbors. Ask them not to shoot at any large white bird — and to pass the word along. Please do it now! The cranes begin to leave Canada in September; the migration continues throughout October; and by late November the last stragglers usually have reached the Aransas Refuge in Texas.

Let's make it a safe flight for the cranes this fall — without the loss of a single bird! Will you do your part to save the majestic whooping cranes for the America of tomorrow?

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What Do You Know?

1. What local duck nests in a hole in a tree?
2. What is Missouri's State bird?
3. What small bird of the open field begins to nest early in March?
4. Name the smallest and the largest local woodpeckers.
5. To what family does the robin belong?
6. What bird consistently lays its eggs in another's nest?
7. Bob white are (1) gregarious (2) gallinaceous (3) both.
8. What hawk feeds almost entirely on fish?
9. What bird impales its victims on thorns?
10. Ducks with "saw-bills" belong to what family?

Answers on
Page 4.

Score: 10 Excellent. 7-9 Good. 5-7 Fair. Below 5, study Peterson.

Enter Next Quiz.

The Bulletin will pay \$1 each for the TEN BEST Quiz Questions submitted for the next issue. Any question regarding birds, the out-of-doors, or conservation will be considered pertinent. You may submit up to 4 questions, but not more than 3 winning questions will be allotted to any one entrant.

Entries for next issue must be postmarked on or before October 23 and winning questions and answers will be published in next issue. Winners will be eligible to participate in larger prize later on.

Address entries to: **James F. Comfort, Editor**
27 N. Iola Drive St. Louis 19, Mo.

St. Louis Audubon Society
516 Bacon Ave.
Webster Groves 19, Mo.

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